

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

STRATEGIC CHALLENGES OF CHINA-AFRICA NEW PARTNERSHIP

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ABSTRACT

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China's interests in Africa have leaped from the export of culture and ideology of the Maoist era to an aggressive diplomatic and economic multilateralism. Energy resource remains a growing imperative to modern economies. Africa is of huge strategic significance to China. Yet the African continent is steeped in poverty, disease and conflict. African growth is still hampered by consumptive cultures and overly weak political economies that push most African nations to the periphery of globalization. Arguably, Africa's relationship with Western nations did not yield genuine development. Africa is still poor despite some Western debt reprieve. Western democracies still acquiesce to dictatorships whose policies supported Western interests. In this project, I would answer the following questions: What would Africa expect from China whose rapidly growing economy is powered by free enterprise, albeit with no perceptible zeal towards western style democracy? How does China's new foray support Africa's desire to be de-linked from ignorance, poverty and instability? And most importantly, what must Africa do to take advantage of this new opportunity? The project would offer that the optimism that greets this new initiative must be sustained by good governance on the part of African nations.

STRATEGIC CHALLENGES OF CHINA-AFRICA NEW PARTNERSHIP

You cannot be strong enough to clap with one hand.

—African proverb

The world order remains defined by the desire of States to pursue national interests that will promote their values and guarantee their security and prosperity. Consequently, the 21st century has witnessed enhanced health care, increased food production and improved regional stability that have encouraged growth in global populations. With its population of 1.3 billion¹ China is determined to pursue its national interests that include economic growth, to support a large population and enhance its global relevance. Its rapid economic growth has increased its hunger for energy, raw materials, market and diplomatic relevance to sustain its power. A key region that China relies on to provide these resources is Africa. In testimonial to this objective, China hosted the Sino-African summit in Beijing in November 2006 where at least 48 African Heads of State attended to discuss economic and diplomatic initiatives that would benefit their regions.²

Africa's wealth in resources has justified China's initiative. According to G.B.N. Ayitteh, with a population of about 700million, Africa has "40% of the world's potential hydro electric power supply; the bulk of the world's diamond and chromium;30% of the uranium in the non communist world;50% of the world's gold; 90% of its phosphate; 40% of its platinum;7.5% of its coal;8% of its known petroleum reserves; 12% of its natural gas; 3% of its iron ore. There is not another continent that is blessed with such abundance and diversity."³ He adds that 64% of the world's manganese, 13% of its copper, and vast bauxite, nickel, and lead resources all come from Africa. In agriculture, Africa accounts for 70% of the world's cocoa, 60% of coffee and 50% of palm oil. The unrivalled wild life, scenic grandeur, and pristine ecology constitute Africa's third greatest natural resource after agriculture and mineral wealth.⁴

Yet, Africa remains bedeviled with several concerns. These cover budget deficits, weak productive capabilities, lack of competitiveness and political crises that have provoked armed conflicts in critical areas of the sub continent. It is also endangered by diseases including HIV/AIDS and malaria. Africa, probably more than any other continent is in search of genuine strategic partnership. Its history has been marked by slavery, colonialism, conflicts, bad governance and debt burden. As Africa attempts to take internal responsibility, it would require genuine external partnership to evict poverty and conflict from the continent. "Based on a common vision and a firm and shared conviction, that they have a pressing duty to eradicate poverty and place their countries ...on a part of sustained economic growth..." African leaders

evolved the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) program.⁵ Success here will depend on how much of the aggregate elements of continental power Africa can collectively leverage to achieve sustainable development and security. In view of the foregoing, is it possible to see a new mutually beneficial partnership between China and Africa?

This paper will therefore examine China's interests in Africa and the consequences for Africa. It will evaluate why China's policy in Africa is largely acceptable to Africa and also offer ways that Africa can take advantage of this new relationship to address its problems. It would further discuss the challenges that Africa faces in China's pursuit of its interests in Africa.

China-Africa: Historical Overview

At the Forum for China and African Cooperation (FOCAC) summit, President Hu Jintao acknowledged in Beijing in November 2006 that the history of China / Africa relations has defied vast oceans and distance. He stated that "China's friendly contacts with Africa date back to the 15th century BC when Mr. Zheng He, a famous navigator in the Ming dynasty, reached the coast of Africa four times, writing an important chapter in the history of China-Africa relations."⁶ Other accounts by Si Machien indicate for instance, that around 100 BC, Emperor Wuti of the Han dynasty sent an envoy to the far West to win the alliance of nations against powerful hostile tribes of Huns in the north. That expedition took the envoy to Likan from where he returned with a magician donated to the Emperor. Likan was identified as Alexandria, Egypt in Africa.⁷ None of these interactions led to colonialism of the African nations. This is perhaps due to the recognition of China's own passion for the protection of its culture against external threats.

A new phase of Sino-African relations was marked by the Bandung Conference of 1955 where some African states formally recognized the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) as the sole government in China entitled to take its legitimate seat at the UN. According to George T. Yu, this Conference "marked the beginning of Chinese appreciation of the role of the third world in combating adversaries and winning international recognition and support and, the beginning of an interest in and policy toward Africa."⁸ The Chinese African policy was therefore inspired by 3 factors: an arena to achieve political and ideological objectives; recognition as the sole government in China and opposition to the Soviet policy worldwide after China's open break with the USSR in the early 1960s.⁹ This new policy was henceforth guided by 3 principles. The first was its commitment to the goal of Africa's revolutionary struggle which Chinese President Zhou Enlai defined as "the struggle for the complete destruction of colonial control... of the African states"¹⁰. The other principles were in "mutual political support" and third world unity. The renewed China- Africa relationship does not only appear to be consistent with these

principles but extends to economic cooperation in order to pursue its national interests. This is neither surprising nor limited to Africa in view of globalization and China's economic revolution. But what have Africa's interests in the China-Africa relationship been?

Whither Africa?

Post cold war Africa has witnessed a lot of transformation and challenges most of which were largely unforeseen. While it has witnessed progress in several key areas like democratization, abolition of apartheid and healthcare, it has been challenged by civil wars, human rights violations, disease and bad governance. Somalia, for example, hitherto tenuously held together by the dynamics of the cold war, became a failed state in the 1990s. Ethiopia and Eritrea were torn from each other. Liberia, Sierra Leone and Cote D'Ivoire lapsed into civil wars at least partially because they no longer enjoyed the subsidies and attention from external powers. On the other hand, the 21st century witnessed progress in conflict prevention, resolution, peacekeeping, democratization and development in Africa. Peace was restored to Liberia, Sierra Leone, Eritrea/ Ethiopia and several other nations. Others like Nigeria, The Gambia, South Africa witnessed democratic transformation. The Organization for African Unity (OAU), whose principal focus was decolonization, became the African Union (AU) in 2001 with a new charter for democracy, conflict prevention, and good governance. The African leaders established the NEPAD program as its vehicle to achieve this. Yet, problems still exist.

From the security sector, the genocides in Rwanda and Darfur remain the shame of mankind. The continent is still fragile with ethnic tensions that are exacerbated by underdevelopment and absence of good governance. On the economic front, the World Bank African Development Indicators (ADI) 2006,¹¹ at best, described Africa as a continent "on the move." Mr. Gobind Nankani, the World Bank (WB) Vice President for the African Region said that the report depicted a diverse continent with several countries making remarkable progress, some stagnating and others lagging seriously behind. Equatorial Guinea for example, recorded a 20.9% growth rate in 2004 due to its new oil wealth. Conversely, Zimbabwe recorded a 2.4% negative growth rate in 2004. The report indicates that only 15 out of 53 countries in Africa have sustained an annual growth rate of 4.5% since the 1990s even though inflation in the continent and fiscal deficits are lower than ever. The GDP and manufacturing capacity of Belgium¹² is still far more than that of the whole sub Saharan Africa put together. The entire African continent received only about \$10 billion, that is, 1.6% of total global Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) in 2005.¹³ Six of the most difficult economic environments in the world are in Africa due to inadequate road infrastructure, inefficient ports, severe power outages and worse of all endemic

corruption¹⁴. These constraints “hobble” efforts of African firms who seek to enter the global market. It costs 20-40% more to do business in Africa than elsewhere. A joint World Bank and International Financial Corporation study called “Doing Business 2006” reports that serious reforms are required more in Africa than elsewhere. Of the 16 African countries surveyed, only two attempted reforms. The WB assesses that Africa needs an average growth rate of 7% annually enabled by \$20bn yearly in infrastructure development funds to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) by 2015. Forty percent of this funding must go to road infrastructure development and 20% into energy and water for any appreciable results to be expected in investments in Africa.¹⁵ Road infrastructure, energy and water are therefore the key interests that must be pursued by Africa in its new partnership with China. But for Africa to benefit from its new relationship with China, it must also carry out reforms in the key areas of governance, bureaucracy, transparency and the judiciary.

How will cooperation with China mitigate Africa’s challenges? What most African nations require from a partnership with China are investments in infrastructural programs to include roads, rail, power, water and information technology that could support Africa’s development. Will China, hungry for raw materials to feed its economy be able to apply best practices to uplift Africa from its strategic security concerns? In the recently concluded Sino African summit (November 5, 2006)¹⁶ China committed the sum of \$5bn to Chinese banks to support credible Chinese companies who wish to do business in Africa. It has also pledged to open its markets to African products from 190 items to 440. These products are eligible for zero tariff treatment. Other commitments are as follows:

- Double China’s 2006 development assistance to Africa by 2009
- Provide preferential credit to Africa worth US\$5billion;
- Cancel all interest-free government debts owed to China by Africa’s highly indebted and least developed nations that have diplomatic relations with China;
- Train at least 15,000 African professionals, provide general scholarships for 4,000 African students by 2009 to study in China, build rural schools in Africa, deploy agricultural experts in Africa, and open up special agricultural technology centers in Africa; and
- Help in the development of the African health infrastructure and the provision of drugs, to intensify Africa’s fight to defeat the malaria pandemic.¹⁷

From these, Nigeria for instance, is expecting Chinese contractors to develop its road, rail and power infrastructure in exchange for oil, raw materials and market. This level of cooperation is groundbreaking but is not the ultimate solution to Nigeria or Africa’s problems. It is argued

that the African economic and social situation would certainly be different if African nations had the expertise, capital, infrastructure and the technologies to process, for example, their cotton crop into finished products; their cocoa into “Hershey” chocolate, or the Ugandan coffee seeds into coffee beverages. But only Africans themselves can guarantee that the new partnership with China will assist in addressing the African economic challenges without getting diverted into the quagmire of corruption. To ensure effective African participation in any new Africa-China relationship, African nations urgently need accountable and visionary leaders that can initiate and drive policies that would engender and manage competition in an information-driven world.

Professor Philip Emeagwali, a celebrated Nigerian-American intellectual, maintains that what Africa really needs is the intellectual capital that is necessary to develop products and services that will lead to poverty alleviation. Productivity, he believes, is the engine that drives global economic growth. He refers to the first annual report of JP Morgan Chase which states that “the power of intellectual capital is the ability to breed ideas that ignite value”.¹⁸ According to him, this is a clarion call to African leaders to shift purposely and deliberately from focus on things to a focus on information; from exporting natural resources to exporting knowledge and ideas; from being a consumer of technology to becoming a producer of technology. He agrees that “ideas are capital. The rest is money.”¹⁹ He therefore argues that “for Africa, poverty will be reduced when intellectual capital is increased and leveraged to export knowledge and ideas.”²⁰ He regrets that Africa’s current strategy for poverty alleviation is limited to gaining debt relief, foreign assistance and investments from Western nations. In this information age, poverty alleviation should result in producing valuable products for the global markets. This cannot be achieved when gold found in Africa are still processed in Europe and resold to Africans!

In addition to the development of human capital and other reforms earlier mentioned, African leaders must be accountable to their citizens for their nations to be able to benefit from a good relationship with China. Do African leaders have the leadership capacity to truly manage this new relationship to the benefit of their nations? The examples of some past African leaders like late President Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire, President Samuel Doe of Liberia and Sani Abacha of Nigeria are not inspiring. Corruption and lack of vision have left most national economies in Africa incapable of meeting the goals of development and prosperity. The implied message of President Bill Clinton during his visit to Nigeria in August 2000 remains valid to Africa’s development, to wit; that Africa’s emancipation must be African-driven! Local regulations, accountability, bureaucracy and attitude cannot be outsourced.²¹ This is the key to peace, development and prosperity in Africa. No relationship with China or any developed country will support developmental objectives without a strong, transparent and visionary local

leadership by African leaders. Only such leaders can develop human capital, improve the investment climate by ensuring the rule of law, transparency and infrastructural development that can guarantee growth.

China's Culture and Interests in Africa

An understanding of China's strategic culture and interests will offer an insight into the nature of its international relations generally, and agenda for Africa in particular. China is largely characterized as Confucian- Mencian in culture. It professes to be pacifist, defense- oriented and of weak martial tradition.²² 'Tributary' by culture, the Chinese enjoy recognition by tributes or gifts from other sovereigns or peoples which they reciprocate by giving more than they receive. By this it establishes its cultural superiority to shore up its ego. In managing conflict, it always opts to fully exhaust all options before resorting to offensive defense as propagated by the ancient military genius, Sun Tzu.²³ China perceives itself as capable of making war outside continental China only in the cause of active defense. Its wars have been limited and seemingly non-expansionist. China justifies its war with Vietnam in 1979 as defensive because Vietnam attacked Cambodia. Similar justifications explained its wars with India in 1962 and the Soviet Union in 1969.²⁴ It has been argued that Chinese culture is real-politick, martial and offensive when their vital interests are concerned.²⁵ China would however, rather reconcile these 2 perceptions of bellicosity and Confucianism as the "Chinese cult of defense."²⁶ Belying all this is the obsession of the Chinese with the superiority of their cultural identity which resonates in their passion for unification. Gen Li Jijun, former Vice President of the Academy of Military Sciences proclaimed to an audience that "the most important strategic legacy of the Chinese nation is the awareness of identification with the concept of unification..."²⁷ China is therefore willing to draw on its instruments of national power to seek and protect Chinese unification to defend its cultural purity.

Because of the strength of its culture, China appears to demonstrate empathy with other cultures. For instance, China perceives the USA to be expansionist, offensive, and obsessed with speed, technology and competition.²⁸ This has informed Chinese attitude and philosophy in its dealings with the US. Modern China has continued to sustain the greatest percentage economic growth of 10% annually in the last 10 years²⁹. This is higher than most other economies in the world. In 2005 for instance, China enjoyed a \$102billion trade surplus.³⁰ China's speed towards free enterprise despite its history of communism has released its energies for competition and commerce like the US. China is however, unlike the US, slow on political reforms and retains censorship and control of information. It is submitted that the

growing political awareness of the younger generation of Chinese will slowly but surely compel democratic reforms in future. Its economic prosperity is empowering mainly the Chinese along the coastal areas, while about 160 million people still living on \$1 a day, are yet unaffected by the new economic prosperity³¹. Both groups will demand more political rights in due course. The Chinese émigrés in the US and Europe are also expected to inspire political reforms back home.

China's perception of Africa must influence what it would offer to Africa and China would expect from the new China/Africa partnership. Several studies on Africa define Africa variously as a paradox: of a continent that is as endowed as it is depraved; a rich continent in conflict with itself that it is incapable of harnessing its resources for meaningful development; a continent so rooted in its history that it invests little zeal on nation-building without prodding.³² While China's true perception of Africa may not be different, it publicly states that Africa is a continent with which it shares the challenges of underdevelopment. Africa in its view needs partnership for development, and China is willing to offer it within the context of its national interests, hence the FOCAC Beijing Action Plan.³³ According to a researcher in an influential Chinese strategic research institute, Mr. Wang Yingying, despite Africa's remarkable economic growth in recent years, African countries are still vulnerable in their economy as majority of their exports are unprocessed raw materials.³⁴ China also perceives Africa as a continent that feels more comfortable with non-intrusive peers.³⁵ These explain why China equated itself with Africa as a companion that is challenged by underdevelopment.³⁶ China's resolve to assist Africa is demonstrated partly in its offer of loans at low interest rates, development of infrastructure and providing cheap products to support the purchasing power of African nations. These are some of what African nations stand to benefit from China³⁷ but what are China's interests in Africa and how sensitive is China to the long term value of its partnership, without responsible political leaderships in each partner-nation? These are key questions that test the integrity of China's relationships with African countries. Various post cold war policy pronouncements are officially couched in terms of mutual diplomatic, political and economic cooperation in Africa.³⁸ On the economic front, its \$2.3 billion stake in oil and gas field³⁹ and the \$2bn railway contract⁴⁰ in Nigeria are a testimony to its interests in Africa. China has similar oil stakes in Sudan, Angola, and Gabon amongst others. It also acquires raw materials like minerals and wood from South Africa, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Liberia. On the political front, the attendance of only African governments that recognize China as the sole government of Taiwan is a strong indication of the political bent of this summit.

What is Africa's response to China's interests? President Thabo Mbeki appraised the relationship with unparalleled optimism.⁴¹ China, which he said acknowledged that it is still a developing country like African countries, was a steadfast ally during the liberation struggles. It remains so in the current fight against poverty and disease. President Mbeki maintained that China's "support to the African people in an effort to achieve the common development of China and Africa is therefore not mere demagoguery."⁴² President Mbeki stated that this opportunity was all "within the context of reform and opening up, understanding the inevitability of the globalization process."⁴³ He however warned that Africa "must make a serious effort to define her relationship with the dominant economies...without defining ourselves as helpless and pitiful victims of globalization, whom the rest of the world must treat as mere recipients of charity, described as humanitarian assistance."⁴⁴ President Mbeki's comments reflect the faith of most African leaders in this new relationship with China.⁴⁵

What is the current status of China's relationship with African nations? According to report of the Institute for Public Policy Research,⁴⁶ China's trade with Africa reached \$40billion in 2005 and promises to hit \$100billion by 2010. China has overtaken Great Britain to become Africa's 3rd leading trading partner after US and France.⁴⁷ Writing in an article titled the "Chinese Connection" Mohammed Al Ghazali stated that "more and more African leaders now cite China as [a] model for their own countries even as its diplomatic offensive in Africa ...has expectedly ruffled feathers across the globe. Their (African leaders) optimism is buoyed by the calamitous failure of Western economic models imposed on such countries since independence".⁴⁸ Professor Wolfowitz, President of the World bank, first derided China and characterized their loans to Africa as irresponsible and capable of "shooting Africa back to debt build-up circles."⁴⁹ But on November 15, 2006, he acknowledged China as a good partner in development who has an "enormous amount to contribute to developing countries and especially to African countries."⁵⁰ China, according to Wolfowitz, had achieved "quite remarkable results and is a stunning example of how a country can transform itself without following any Western textbook."⁵¹ The European Union (EU) which had also challenged China's growing influence as "blind to human rights, political ineptitude and neglect of environmental standards"⁵² has now become muted.

The reality is therefore reflected not only in perception but in the various economic and social commitments of the Chinese government in the continent of Africa. Apart from the relentless diplomatic shuttles around the continent, the following footprints among others are evident:⁵³

- Nigeria- Railroad refurbishment (2002); propane and butane extraction; 2 power plants development; road and drainage improvement all worth \$515.25m
- Sudan- High power electric line (2003); power lines for hydro electric power dam (2003) totaling \$426m and a recently proposed presidential palace for the Sudanese government.
- Kenya- Port upgrade(2004) \$2m
- Zimbabwe- Irrigation project (2003); coal mines (2003); rural power grid upgrade (2004) \$600m+
- Angola- Army camp (2004)
- Gabon- Senate palace (2003); Iron mine (2004)
- Equatorial Guinea- Road construction (2003,2004)
- Cameroon- Hospital maintenance(2003)
- Guinea- Broadcasting facility.
- Mozambique- Foreign ministry building(2003); high school(2004)
- Eritrea- Residential housing (2003); Hospital (2003) total \$10m.
- Ethiopia- Power plant (2002); water resource development (2004); pharmaceutical joint venture (2004) \$234m.

Consequences for Africa

The new China/ Africa relationship raises a lot of positive and negative issues for Africa. China never colonized Africa despite opportunities to do so. It is re-assuring that this relationship is already reducing the debt burden of African nations as proclaimed in the recently concluded FOCAC summit, in Nov 2006. The initiatives will certainly moderate African nations' over-reliance on the West, whose terms and conditions are perhaps, considered stringent. Funds can now be available to fight deadly diseases and develop human capital that African nations so desperately needed. In the short term and, in the absence of any strong African productive capacity, Chinese cheap goods and services will continue to be a relief to local consumers. In the medium and long terms, the products of a genuine relationship will afford Africa true development. This could take the form of infrastructure development, effective communication system, information connectivity, good transportation, affordable housing, and jobs. This will provide a great atmosphere for individual and societal self actualization. The reduction in power outages in Africa will boost industrialization ranging from cottage industries to high profile manufacturing.

Genuine China/Africa cooperation will challenge other nations to also compete for Africa's confidence and trust. This environment could open up foreign markets to African goods and services. It would challenge African leaders to demonstrate good governance and accountability to their peoples or be lost in the tide of the competitive environment. Access to services like insurance, medical, posts, legal services will propel economic growth and social cohesion. With China's support in developing infrastructure and competition, African communities will begin to enjoy connection to the global network of information and other services. This could encourage a return of skilled Africans in Diasporas to tackle the developmental challenges back home. The diversity of expertise from the Diasporas will spur Africa's development. Even though China need not be directly involved in many of these activities, a positive China-Africa relationship could contribute to these and possibly other positive developments.

Against the backdrop of optimism and euphoria, certain fears emerge from the new China/Africa relationship that require closer examination. China's relationships with some African nations have evoked questions. For instance, many have questioned China's relationship with Sudan in the face of Sudan's records of human rights violations and in particular, the genocide in Darfur.⁵⁴ But China is quick to maintain that its relationship with Sudan is purely business and not political.⁵⁵ Despite evidence of arms sales⁵⁶ to the Sudanese government which are now used by the Janjaweed militias of Darfur, China maintains that it does not interfere in the internal affairs of Sudan or any nation.

At a global level, China's position on the expansion of the UN Security Council as it relates to Africa raises concern for the continent. China was opposed to the expansion of the Security Council to accommodate more members. This was principally attributed to the fears of US support for Japan. But it was also believed that China wanted to continue to speak for and defend Africa, its fear of losing relevance among African member states if they were now represented in the UN Security Council existed. China's halfhearted urging to African nations to insist on the veto power appears from this perspective to be a way for China to seem to be supporting African Security Council membership while encouraging something it knows will scuttle the effort.⁵⁷

Paul Kennedy suggests that the GDP of Belgium is higher than that of all the States of sub Saharan Africa put together. Africa contributes only 1% to world GDP while manufacturing represents only 11% of its economic activities.⁵⁸ Most manufacturing industries in Nigeria for instance, are mainly foreign outlets; where indigenously owned, they are largely inefficiently run. To be able to compete globally requires a transition by African nations, from import dependence to export orientation.⁵⁹ In spite of China's promises, it is submitted that the China / Africa

cooperation has yet, no assurance of attaining this objective. Asked about the potential of instability in China for instance, Mr. Ibinabo Dodiya-Manuel, a seasoned Nigeria banker has this to say: "What becomes of the African connection and link, should China, as yet regarded as stable, face sudden significant challenges arising from say, an economic meltdown. With weak regulatory and supervisory institutions in its financial markets, such scenario is plausible. The country which has witnessed double-digit economic growth for a decade has unleashed investment frenzy throughout the population of corporate executives, professionals, blue-collar and new urban migrants from the poor countryside. These people, in their bid to get rich quick, have borrowed from weakly supervised banks and invested in equities on the Shanghai and Shenzhen stock exchanges. Most of these companies run opaque accounting procedures which are not in line with global (Western) standards. Should these markets overheat and crash, a sudden selling frenzy could wipe out investments of the populace which can potentially threaten social order. Income disparity between the urban rich in the coastal cities and the countryside if not checked could also threaten stability. A temptation to apply a military solution on the Taiwan issue as a result of economic confidence and modernization of the Chinese armed forces, in the absence of checks and balances in democratic institutions, which are as yet lacking, could cause a crash in the Chinese courses which may then spread to western and global equality markets causing recession, global economic checks. In such plausible scenarios, where lies the partnership with Africa?"⁶⁰ This truly reflects the fears of those who feel that lack of democracy and globally acceptable economic regulatory precepts may upset the Chinese system with its attendant collateral effects on those, especially Africa, who depend heavily on it.

Another reality is that China's interests include the desire for markets for its finished products. African nations provide such markets at the peril of their competitive productive capacity. For example, "Chinatown" in the heartland of Lagos in Nigeria is fast gaining notoriety as a dumping ground for cheap, and, at times, sub-standard Chinese goods and services. These goods range from electronics, cosmetics to building materials. The prospects of developing an indigenous capacity for domestic manufacturing are challenged by these cheap imports from China to Nigeria. This situation is repeated in most African nations, where entrepreneurial capital base is inhibited by high interest rates and unstable currency, thus making business viability a challenge. This is compounded by erratic power supply, crime, bad roads, unreliable judiciary, corrupt and unwieldy bureaucracy. Even if the new China-Africa partnership improves Africa's infrastructure, the effects of Chinese dumping may cancel out the potential developmental gains of better roads and more reliable power supply.

With a population of 140m, Nigeria has a productive base that hardly challenges that of China. For instance, while China's GDP per capita is \$7,600, that of Nigeria is \$1,400.⁶¹ China is already taking advantage of Africa's productive capacity failure to dump goods and services on Nigeria and other African nations. The Botswana situation is captured by the following response to an e mail inquiry: "Botswana is an open market economy. The Chinese have helped bring prices down. China has killed our textile industry and now they are even selling the local food...and will drive away small business people. The advantage is that they are giving the Indians competition; this will force them to reduce their prices. Chinese also help bring construction costs down, cheap building materials and labor costs."⁶² Although these are only two examples, they generally reflect the entire African situation. Those who favor the FOCAC initiative state that China's focus on infrastructure and transportation in return for competitive oil deals and other raw materials are indicators of serious efforts to develop capacity in Africa but they warn that good governance at the local level is imperative.⁶³

How Africa Can Own It

The priorities of investments in infrastructure in Africa as enumerated earlier suggest a bias in favor of individual political self-preservation rather than collective national vision. In all the projects undertaken in Africa by China for the periods shown, only Mozambique invested in education! While the educational sector has suffered over the years in several African countries, investments in favor of "army barracks", "journalism facility", "foreign ministry buildings", and "senate palace" in countries like Ghana, Angola, and Gabon suggest little vision⁶⁴. What African nations urgently need in order to benefit from the partnership with China is good governance. Good governance comes with strength of political character that is transparent, accountable, visionary, courageous and tolerant. It comes with knowledge and shared vision. Good leadership must be conscious of how much time Africa has lost and act with speed. It must encourage competition and debate, it must be ready to reward performance and reform or punish offenders. It must invest heavily in human capital and abide by the rule of law.

Political leadership must lead and drive the reforms in the bureaucracy, judiciary, security and the rest of the civil society. It was the failure in these areas that compelled the western developed economies to tie their investments to strict conditionalities in Africa. Responsible societies should have built-in controls to answer these conditionalities proactively. Africa must revert to its ancient culture of integrity, transparency, pride and hard work. It must incorporate these principles and recognize the reality of the globalization process. Without this transition, no amount of support or partnership with China or any other nation or region can guarantee

security and prosperity for Africa. The imperative of a strong and focused political leadership cannot be outsourced.

Because of the impatience and competition of the globalization process, African immigrants who are contributing and assimilated into developed societies in the Western world must be encouraged to return home in alliance with local capacity for the development of African nations. Such nationals in diasporas have a lot to share in information technology, bureaucratic reforms, law enforcement, work ethic, and planning. Institutions must be empowered and strengthened to conduct research and development in all areas of human endeavor in support of national growth.

Conclusion: Winners Don't Take All

Many African governments are democracies only in appellation. They are made up of sit-tight leaders under arrangements that civil societies view as a fraud on the will of the people. Such leaders thrive on muzzled opposition and censored press as in the then Mobutu's Zaire and Idi Amin's Uganda. If an outside model is the prescription for Africa's problems, to where do Africans turn? Western governments have been known to do business with, and supported dictatorships whose policies favored their national interests. According to David Kang, "China is not unique in cutting deals with bad governments and providing arms"⁶⁵ Take the revelations of John Perkins who claimed to have been a tool recruited by the US National Security Agency.⁶⁶ He confessed to implementing policies and bogus economic advisory models for nations like Indonesia, Ecuador, Panama and Saudi Arabia. Perkins admitted to secret schemes that recycled billions of Saudi Arabian petrodollars back into the US economy. Belgian sustenance of Mobutu in Zaire who surrendered the wealth of the country to Belgium remains another case in point.⁶⁷ These instances go to establish that China is not alone when it adopts policies that support its national interest. So what nature of relationship should Africa expect from China? It is believed that the relationship with Africa is to project China's national interest through (hopefully) mutually beneficial relationship with China's African partners. It is left for Africa or African nations to properly identify, define and negotiate their interests for their benefit.

Can China inspire democracies in African nations? China's history is punctuated by frequent interactions with Western civilization. Yet it has not adopted Western style democracy. Rogers V. Des Forges believes that "the PRC and its 'new democracy' have precedents in the Chinese past and reflect many kinds of influences emanating from other parts of the world in recent times."⁶⁸ One of such influences that interrupted 2000 years of "oriental emperorism," according to Des Forges, was east European Stalinism which tragically inflicted the worst

despotism on China for ages.⁶⁹ But Des Forges still saw this as a ray of hope that suggests that China is not immune to change or foreign influence. The most recent indicator is its transition from a wholly state-controlled economy to a relatively free market. It may not have floated its currency but this may be overcome by the force of global integration sooner than later.⁷⁰

The obstacles that China experiences are rooted, as Des Forges stated, in “a blatant contradiction between Western ‘liberal’ ideas and Western imperial assaults on China’s culture, political and economic integrity.”⁷¹ Little wonder that China chose to put economic goals ahead of Western style democracy. Could this be a right model for African nations? Robert D. Kaplan almost agrees: “if a society is not in reasonable health, democracy can be dangerous.”⁷² Asian examples have affirmed that discipline and focus are overarching considerations. Des Forges, like Robert Kaplan, argues that “despite the contemporary crisis of socialism in general and in China in particular, it is by no means clear that the existing capitalist system can solve the major problems of the world, including the growing gap between the wealthy and the poor and the rising pressure of population on resources.”⁷³ He warns that a world system that integrates the globe economically and technologically as we have today is hardly a universal order if it lacks a good measure of “cultural convergence,” “political unity” and “social justice.”⁷⁴ Which model therefore, would China inspire in Africa?

For China, the strategic effect of this new partnership with Africa could be a win-win situation for it. China’s patience, sacrifice and historic solidarity with the African people is paying off in trade and cultural exchanges. It would earn itself the confidence and potential/diplomatic support of Africans and the raw materials and oil resources that it needs to power its economy. China will be able to sustain its economic growth rate, reduce the level of domestic poverty and build prosperity for its 160 million out of 1.3 billion people who still live under \$1 a day. Direct flights to Beijing from Lagos, Nigeria have been initiated. This is likely to divert people away from the traditional European and American routes in the near future.

On the Chinese social and political perspective, the question remains whether, the enhanced domestic prosperity will continue to subordinate the yearning of the increasingly vibrant youths for more democracy. Some argue that the more empowered the people are economically, the more they would be integrated to global events that would propel a struggle for democracy.⁷⁵ Others argue that once the domestic economic situation is good, people are less likely to care about who governs.⁷⁶ It is submitted that this argument cannot hold for a modern China in the long term. A democratic China will not negatively affect Africa’s growth if the political leaderships have focus with a responsive and active populace.

On the external spectrum, it is foreseen that a successful partnership with Africa will earn China the solidarity of African nations in the international fora, including the United Nations. It would not only raise China's influence but increase the relevance of Africa in global arena. But for Africa to emerge a more prosperous continent in this new relationship, the national leaders, be they democracies or otherwise, must be transparent, bold and visionary. They must focus on developing human capital that can produce value.

Since globalization will continue to drive integration and interconnectivity, the control of African 'despots' will diminish as human rights activism becomes more dynamic. The tenacity of China/Africa relationship will be tested continually as national interests are subjected to global criticism. Some African leaders, as in Sudan, may remain comfortable with the "business only" stance of China, but global reactions will be more forceful as seen in the universal condemnation over the genocides in Darfur and Rwanda. With institutional reforms which are a sine qua non, Africa nations will be economically prosperous and politically stable in the medium and long terms.

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